Using Interlibrary Loan Data ...
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sertation research. Note of caution: patron-use information could be skewed if student assistants request in their own names materials through ILL that are actually intended for a professor’s research.

- **By borrowing cost.** Documented borrowing costs are crucial when analyzing high-volume requests of articles from specific journals. Do the copyright and/or IFM fees paid in a given year exceed the actual cost of subscribing to the journal and maintaining it on-site? If yes, is this cost level consistent from year to year or did it spike during one isolated year? And does the journal reflect an active area of the curriculum?

- **By lender.** By examining aggregate ILL data, it could be revealed, for example, that the library has been borrowing a high volume of materials on international law from a nearby university that has recently started to develop a strong collection in this area. Does international law fit into the borrowing library’s own curriculum? Or do the requests reflect concentrations of specialized research needs beyond the level and scope of the borrowing library? As the time arises for the collaborative collection development agreement with this institution to come under its scheduled review, the possibility of formally assigning international law as a topic to the lending university could be addressed.

What is being requested through interlibrary loan, and why?

A trail of several years can provide enough data to provide a history of what was being borrowed across a broader spectrum of time. Being able to sort ILL data by department/area of study and patron level provides insight into context of the request. Bibliographers can glean from such “ILL trails” evidence of areas not yet covered by existing library collections or research interests beyond the scope of the collection.

**Example uses of overview statistics:**

- **For example, a three-year total count of ILL requests (reflecting articles and monographs), broken down by academic area of study, provides an at-a-glance overview of total requests for each area.**

- **The quick overview points to areas of heavy borrowing, which warrant further examination — either by detailed information within the academic area, or a year-by-year comparison of borrowing volume by academic area, or both.**

- **If an institutional program begun in the last two years has an ILL trail of heavy borrowing, then that academic area’s requests should be scrutinized in detail in order to determine whether the requests reflect specialized research beyond the program’s scope or a core component of the program not yet adequately covered in the library’s own collection.**

**Example uses of detailed information — some scenarios:**

- A given area’s academic programs are changing and/or expanding. Professors are request-